

PARTICIPATORY STRATEGIC PLANNING

THE EXPERIENCE OF USAID'S CENTER FOR POPULATION, HEALTH AND NUTRITION IN DESIGNING ITS HIV/AIDS STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

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Abstract

USAID has been the leading technical and financial sponsor of HIV/AIDS prevention in developing countries, since 1986. The AIDS Technical Support Program (ATSP), managed under the Center for Population, Health and Nutrition of the Global Bureau (PHNC), has been the primary vehicle for USAID's response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. With the anticipated end of ATSP project in August of 1997, PHN decided to redesign its HIV/AIDS strategy, in the period of August 1995 to December 1996. This document describes the participatory strategic planning process.

The primary rationale for a participatory approach to the redesign process was the belief that committed stakeholders lead to greater program effectiveness, impact and sustainability. While participation of stakeholders dramatically improve the outcomes of the resultant program, there are many perceived and actual constraints and risks to it. Stakeholder skepticism about their role, concern about unrealistic expectations, and differences among stakeholders are some of the common anxieties. While the outcomes of the participatory approach to strategic planning under such circumstances is unpredictable, there were a number of measures implemented in the re-design of SO 4, that minimized the constraints, while maintaining the integrity of the stakeholder participation.

Three stages were implemented in the participation process. Stage one consisted of HIV/AIDS Prevention Conferences held in Washington and Vancouver, as well as numerous town meetings held in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Central America, and Washington. A donors' meeting was also held in April. Questionnaires were distributed to NGO's and USAID missions. With over a thousand participants in every conceivable stakeholder group, a Universal Framework of Objectives for HIV/AIDS was created. Stage two entailed a multi-stakeholder Priority Setting Workshop which was held in Washington. SO 4 design workshop defined PHNC's strategic objective and set priorities for the strategic process. Preliminary results were drafted. In Stage three a series of core team meetings were held, in which the team validated the strategic objective, increased the number of results, defined subresults, and chose performance indicators. Intended and actual outcomes of the participation process are described.





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Acknowledgments

"Never forget that a small group of committed individuals can change the world. Indeed, its the only thing that ever has."

Margaret Meade

As is appropriate for one of the most extensive and intensive participatory strategic planning exercises undertaken anywhere, the responsibility for its success belongs to many people.

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Credit for the quality of the strategic plan belongs to the Core Team (Celeste Carr, Jim Heiby, Chloe O'Gara, Irene Koek, Keys MacManus, and Alex Ross) who, with patience and good-humor, took on an enormous responsibility, preserved the integrity of that which had come before, and added a tremendous amount of value.

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Foreword

In an age where participation, customer-focus, and managing for results are becoming the norms of development work, there is an increasing demand for operationally useful guidelines and demonstrated best-practices. Managers want to know whether and how participation can contribute to higher quality program designs that are more responsive to beneficiary requirements, build commitment to program objectives and implementation arrangements, and ensure support for important assumptions and conditionalities. This document attempts to answer some of these questions, and, to the extent that it is successful in doing so, will we hope encourage others to experiment with participatory approaches to strategic management



Acronyms

AFR	Bureau for Africa
AIDSCAP	AIDS Control and Prevention Project
AIDSCOM	AIDS Public Health Communications Project
AIDSTECH	AIDS Technical Support Project
ANE	Bureau for Asia and the Near East
ATSP	AIDS Technical Support Program
CSM	Condom Social Marketing
CPHN	Center for Population, Health and Nutrition
CTO	Cognizant Technical Officer
ESA	Eastern and Southern Africa
GTZ	Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (German Development Agency)
HTS	Health Technical Services Project
LAC	Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean
NGO	nongovernmental organization
ODA	Overseas Development Administration (UK)
PCM	project cycle management
PLWA	Person(s) Living with HIV and AIDS
PPC	Bureau for Policy and Program Coordination
RF	results framework
SO	strategic objective
STI	sexually transmitted infections
UFO	Universal Framework of Objectives
UNAIDS	United Nations Joint and Co-sponsored Programme on AIDS
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	United States Government
ZOPP	Ziel Objectives-orientierte Projekt Planungs





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"The HIV epidemic will pose an unprecedented challenge to...human survival, human rights and human development"
William H. Draper III, formerly of UNDP.

1. THE HIV/AIDS EPIDEMIC

The HIV/AIDS epidemic is one of the most important problems facing the developing world today. Already, it has begun to reverse thirty years of hard-won gains in development. Consider the effects on a country with an advanced epidemic: life-expectancy at birth declines by almost half;¹ household income is threatened as the infected become less productive and their family give up work to care for them; household savings are exhausted to pay for care and funeral expenses; children even if they are not orphaned are removed from school; productive sectors experience high labor turnover and absenteeism due to deaths and illness, with resulting losses in productivity and production; half of total health expenditure is devoted to HIV/AIDS-related treatment; and the economy as a whole shrinks.²

Further, this is not one but several regional epidemics: as it matures in Africa, it is still in its relative infancy in most of Asia and Latin America; and while heterosexual transmission is the most important worldwide cause of infection, the relative importance of other causes (perinatal, injecting drug use, blood transfusion and parenteral) of transmission vary across regions.

¹In Uganda it had dropped to 37 years by 1994. In Zimbabwe, AIDS could reduce life-expectancy from 70 to 40 years in the next 15 years.

²By 2010, the Tanzanian economy is forecasted to be 14-24% smaller than it would have been without the epidemic.



2. THE STAKEHOLDERS

Since the early days of the epidemic, the number of organized stakeholders in HIV/AIDS has increased geometrically. Apart from the broadening of pre-existing portfolios and operations to include HIV/AIDS considerations, entirely new multilateral, regional, government and nongovernmental institutions have been established with a sole focus on this epidemic. The most conspicuous of these newer institutions are UNAIDS at the multilateral level, and the national AIDS control programs at the national level. This growth in stakeholder numbers was reflected at the recent (July 1996) International HIV/AIDS Conference, where some 18,000 representatives participated.

USAID, the Center for Population, Health and Nutrition, and the HIV/AIDS Division

Since 1986, USAID has been the leading provider of technical and financial assistance for HIV/AIDS prevention in developing countries. It has committed more than \$700 million through multilateral, regional, and bilateral programs in more than 40 countries in order to reduce the further spread of HIV. USAID is a largely decentralized institution, and responsibility for programming in HIV/AIDS is distributed between individual field offices (missions and regional offices); the Center for Population, Health & Nutrition of the Global Bureau (PHNC); Regional Bureaus; and the Bureau for Policy and Program Coordination (PPC). Despite this decentralized arrangement, however, the USAID response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic has primarily been implemented and coordinated through a single program the AIDS Technical Support Program (ATSP)³ managed by PHNC.

Since the ATSP is due to come to an end in August 1997, it was decided to redesign the Center's HIV/AIDS strategic objective, and the mechanisms by which it will be implemented, in time for launch by that date.

³The ATSP consists of one major contract (AIDSCAP) and twelve other cooperative agreements.



3.OVERVIEW OF THIS STUDY

This document describes the background, history and outcomes of the participatory strategic planning process, and the underlying models and techniques used to guide it to a successful conclusion.

The Technical Notes describe the theory of participatory strategic planning, and serves as background to the processes, techniques and tools used in this exercise. The Preparing section articulates the rationale for a participatory approach to strategic planning, as well as the institutional and other constraints to such an approach, and describes the customized participation strategy designed to maximize these benefits while minimizing the constraints.

The Implementing section briefly describes what happened in each of the three major stages in the participation process. Process and content gains and setbacks are described in each of these sections.

The Results section considers whether this participatory planning process was successful in achieving its objectives.

The Lessons Learned section identifies both those key (replicable) factors that contributed to the success of this participation exercise, and those pitfalls that other should avoid when considering their own participatory strategic planning processes.

4. Technical Notes

5. THE THEORY OF PARTICIPATORY STRATEGIC PLANNING

"If only it weren't for the people" said Finnerty, "always getting tangled up in the machinery. If it weren't for them, earth would be an engineer's paradise"
from *Player Piano*, by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.

6. Participation

There is a plethora of competing interpretations of "participation" in the context of international development.¹ A frequent complaint among USAID staff about the Agency's reengineering initiative is that participation is nothing new - we have been doing it for years. The reengineering guidance reinforced this - largely incorrect - belief by responding that the new initiative was acknowledging and encouraging the use of these past best practices. This amounts to a licence to carry on the status quo.² This technical note proposes a firm characterization of participation by seeking first to describe its objectives, and then the conditions necessary to achieve those objectives.

¹This diversity of interpretations is accompanied by corresponding confusion about the meaning and content of participation, it is therefore perhaps not surprising that development agencies have found it more difficult than not to achieve (or even pursue) significant stakeholder participation in their activities, despite the increasing prevalence of participation rhetoric in strategic and operational guidelines. Indeed, the mismatch between rhetoric and reality has already caused some conflict around the design of individual participatory processes, and may soon contribute to the decline of participation as a priority in several institutions

².

7. Why is Participation Desirable?

To its advocates, participation is a matter of both principle and practice. The principle is that beneficiaries should be involved in making decisions that affect their welfare. This is viewed a matter of extending the principles of democracy and good governance to an agency's own programming.

The practical benefits are that the effectiveness, performance and sustainability of a development initiative depend on both the commitment

of stakeholders to the initiative, and to the technical quality of its design and implementation (see the Figure 1 below).

Participation, Commitment and Performance: the empirical evidence

There is a substantial amount of evidence to support the theory that some types of participation leading to commitment cause greater program effectiveness and sustainability. For example, a detailed comparative analysis* of 121 rural water supply projects supported by 18 international agencies in 49 Asian, African and Latin American countries found, inter alia, that:

there is a strong, robust, statistical (causal) association between participation and performance : projects with participation consistently out-performed (in terms of overall project effectiveness) those with information-gathering and consultation by 25 to 51 percent; and

the benefits of participation seem to work more through their intermediate impact on beneficiary commitment than through design quality.

*Narayan 1994, and Isham et. al. 1995

Recognition of the central role played by stakeholder commitment to achieving aid objectives is becoming widespread. The World Bank, for example, states that "the Bank's...interest in participation stems from the need for Bank-supported policies and projects to perform well on the basis of strengthened commitment and broad-based ownership."³

³"The World Bank and Participation,' The World Bank, Operations Policy Department, 1994.

8. What is "commitment"?

Stakeholder commitment is an intrinsic motivation to act to achieve objectives. Three major points need to be emphasized:

Commitment is about action. It is, therefore, not simply about intellectual agreement, but also about motivation: the factor that energizes behavior and sustains it over time.

Commitment is about intrinsic motivation. In extrinsic motivation, we engage in particular behaviors in order to receive (or avoid) certain incentives (or punishments) that are outside or external to a certain task⁴. In intrinsic motivation, we act because we believe in and value the task itself. The distinction between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation is an old one⁵ in the fields of organization development and social psychology. Intrinsic motivation is more powerful and more sustainable than extrinsic motivation: for the latter to work, rewards need to be large and increasing over time.

Commitment is directional. It is an intrinsic motivation to act to achieve an objective. Commonality of objectives among stakeholders is therefore highly important. Indeed, where there is motivation to act but a divergence of objectives, conflict and opposition will be very high.

⁴In the context of international development work, extrinsic motivation exists when, for example, stakeholders act because they believe that this will cause a development agency to allocate or disburse funds (external rewards) as a consequence of their actions.

⁵See, for example, the work of A.H. Maslow 1943; F.W. Herzberg 1959 and 1968; B.M. Staw 1976; E.L. Deci 1975.

9. How is commitment measured?

Commitment is not measured by the declared excitement or satisfaction of participants at the end of a participatory planning process, but by the timely and full discharge of the roles and responsibilities assigned for the implementation of the development initiative. While these roles and responsibilities will vary according to context, the basic commitment indicators will not. The supplier(s) provide a certain quality and quantity of products and services according to an established timetable; customers use these products and services and add value to them; partners commit to coordinating their responses; and critical affecters commit to removing current and future obstacles to this customer-supplier relationship.

10. Why do people commit?

Commitment is a behavioral response to a psychological state. People are committed to something when they associate that thing with a strong sense of:

- achievement (derives from the experience of having completed something challenging and important).

- involvement (derived from the experience of being included of being a player rather than being on the sidelines while others do the work).

- influence (derived from the experience of having one's ideas heard and used).

- feedback (ensure that stakeholders are able to evaluate the quality of their joint-decisions in terms of progress toward achieving the objectives).

While technical quality in the design and implementation of aid activities may be achieved through consultation with beneficiaries, such methods will not and cannot alone achieve stakeholder commitment.

11. How could teams operationalize participation?



From the definition articulated above, it is not difficult to model the basic process of participatory strategic planning. Such a model is presented here:

Clarify the objectives of the participatory design process. **Make sure that everyone involved in your organization knows what the participation process is expected to achieve and how that achievement will be measured.**

Identify and invite stakeholders. **Identify your institutional customers, partners, and those entities and persons who have an important role in regulating the relationship between you and your customers. Ask those stakeholders that you have identified if anyone is missing.**

Communicate to stakeholders that their participation is valued. **This can be achieved by showing them exactly how their input will be used, or by making a significant financial investment in their participation.**

Convene and collaborate decision-making events. **At these events stakeholders make decisions that are irreversible. It is not enough to consult or share ideas. You become participants (and not hosts) and an experienced facilitator is usually required to ensure that power is equally shared among participants.**

Use the decisions made in these events. **The decisions that have been made at the collaborative event(s) are used to form the strategic and tactical plans.**

Provide full and regular feedback. **Make sure that the strategic and tactical plans that you have crafted have not changed the meaning or spirit of the decisions made at the collaborative events. Provide the participants, and the wider stakeholder group, full feedback on the outcome.**

This model can be used for any and all processes designed to achieve stakeholder commitment to strategic, program or project plans. The quality of the participation process will be determined by the quality with which each step in the process is implemented.

12.Strategic Planning

"I would not give a fig for simplicity this side of complexity, but I would give my life for simplicity the other side of complexity"

Oliver Wendell Holmes.



Participation occurs around content. The challenge in strategic planning is to focus on specific, measurable, achievable, and time-bound objectives, and to construct a plausible development hypothesis around those objectives. Several related logical and results-oriented planning methods exist, all descended from a common ancestry namely the Logical Framework Approach (LFA) developed by USAID in the 1960s. The version currently in use by USAID is called the Results Framework.

The value of results-oriented planning methods to participatory strategic planning processes is that they:

- focus stakeholder efforts on objectives (interests), rather than on activities or budgets (positions), thereby minimizing conflict
- simplify a complex planning process making it accessible to all participants

- summarize the exact strategy making it transparent to all stakeholders.

However, these approaches have suffered for a long time from a single important drawback: they have failed to demonstrate an obvious a priori link between results planning and participation. Since the mid-1980s, however, such a link has been developed through the incorporation of the TQM concepts of customer-supplier relationships into the LFA. As a result, both the value and the use of results-planning methods in participation processes has increased: GTZ's ZOPP and ODA's PCM are two such methods currently in successful use.

13. Development Hypotheses

The Results Framework approach to strategic planning is intended to emphasize the primacy of development objectives and of the relationships among these objectives.¹ The hierarchy of objectives includes: the goal (the higher order objective to which a strategy contributes); the strategic objective (the impact of the strategy); the results (the deliverables of the strategy, or its terms of

¹Several important portfolio reviews (Wapenhans at the World Bank, Knox at the African Development Bank, etc.) have documented that, in reality, activities have often been pre-eminent over the objectives they are supposed to achieve. It is not unusual to find projects, for example, with no purpose and no way of measuring impact.

reference); and illustrative approaches (the main activities that must be undertaken in order to accomplish the results).

These objectives are related to each other in causal (if-then) terms. Assumptions describe the risks and externalities under which the results framework operates.

When supplemented by performance indicators that are specific, measurable, achievable, results-oriented and time-bound (SMART), the relationships between levels of objective form the basis for objective verification of program impacts and effectiveness, and therefore of continuous improvement during implementation.

14. Who's a Stakeholder, Suppliers, Customers, and Critical Affecters

The results framework approach is useful in identifying and analyzing stakeholders, and therefore bridging the gap between planning and participation.